



M. J. "MIKE" POSTER, JR.
GOVERNOR

State of Louisiana

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Baton Rouge

70804-9004

POST OFFICE BOX 94604
(504) 342-7015

June 13, 2000

Mr. Chuck Fox, Assistant Administrator
Office of Water
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
401 M Street SW (4101)
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Mr. Fox:

The expanding seasonal zone of hypoxic water in the Gulf Mexico off the coast of Louisiana is of great concern to the citizens of our state. We are convinced that these conditions have grown to such an extent as to pose a threat to our heritage, culture and economy. We also believe that this is the time to take up the stewardship challenge of alleviating those risks.

We appreciate that much of the nitrate loading causing the problem comes from upstream but also accept that we have a significant role to play. We recognize that the hypoxia issue cannot be solved without the cooperation of all states within the Mississippi River drainage basin. We intend to do our part.

Louisiana is presently undertaking aggressive measures to reduce hypoxia in the Northern Gulf - measures that are fundamentally consistent with conserving and restoring our entire coastal ecosystem. First, we will continue to reduce point-source and non-point source nutrient loading into the Mississippi River system from industrial, municipal and agricultural sources. We are accomplishing this in various ways, e.g., via the Section 319 program, by implementing best management practices in farming and silviculture and by expanding municipal rainfall runoff treatment. Second, we have embarked on an ambitious, \$14 billion coastal restoration program that includes constructing and cost sharing a variety of projects, especially river diversion projects, that should significantly reduce nitrate levels in the water that ultimately flows into the Gulf of Mexico.

We support a comprehensive Action Plan that at a minimum:

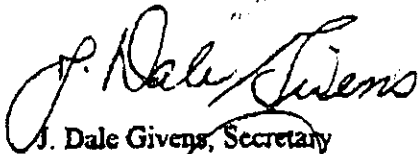
- provides for a 30% reduction from current levels of annual nitrate loading into the Northern Gulf of Mexico;
- identifies tools available throughout the Mississippi River drainage basin to help achieve this goal, including best management practices and programs such as the Conservation and Wetlands Reserve Programs;
- incorporates flexible management capability with respect to existing and new Mississippi River outlets, as anticipated by the Coast 2050 plan and such efforts as the Corps of Engineers' Challenge 21 program; and

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- establishes comprehensive river and Gulf monitoring programs to assess the effectiveness of each element of the Action Plan.

We believe that these measures can be implemented on a voluntary, non-regulatory basis and, further, that they would provide benefits throughout the Mississippi River drainage basin beyond the primary goal of reducing hypoxia.

Sincerely,



J. Dale Givens, Secretary
Department of Environmental Quality



John E. Roussel, Assistant Secretary
Department of Wildlife and Fisheries



Len Bahr, Executive assistant for Coastal Activities
Office of the Governor